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The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment is now available. I have enclosed the version that you requested; a full DEIS, a summary of the DEIS, or a CD. The CD is in .pdf format and requires Adobe Acrobat Reader (see the readme.text file on the CD). If you did not make a specific request you are receiving a summary. The full and summary documents along with background documents are also located on the internet at www.fs.fed.us/rl/planning/lynx.html. If you wish to receive a full DEIS or a CD version of the DEIS please contact Joan Dickerson at (406) 329-3314 or email her at jdickerson@fs.fed.us.

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are proposing to amend existing resource management plans for 18 national forests and four BLM units to incorporate management direction to manage lynx habitat. The direction would apply to about 18.5 million acres mapped as lynx habitat. Public comments collected during scoping were used to identify primary issues, management concerns, alternatives and the scope of the DEIS. Five alternatives, including no action, were fully developed and analyzed. All action alternatives would incorporate – to varying degrees – management direction for vegetation, fire, grazing, winter recreation, minerals, roads and highways.

The Forest Service and BLM prefer Alternative E. Alternative E addresses the issue of wildland fire risk while contributing to lynx conservation. It also responds to findings that grazing, mineral, forest roads and over-the-snow activities do not affect lynx populations.

We invite your comments on this draft document within 90 days of the publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* expected January 16, 2004. We encourage you to be as specific as possible with your comments. The agencies will prepare a Final EIS based on the comments. Possible changes in the final EIS are: (1) modified alternatives, including the preferred; (2) new alternatives; (3) additional analysis; or (4) factual corrections. We anticipate completing the Final EIS and making a decision later this year.

Please send written comments to the Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment, Northern Region Headquarters, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807. Send E-mail comments to comments-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us (please specify *Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment* on the subject line).

The agencies will hold informational meetings in several communities in February and March. The attached list provides the location, date and time of the meetings. The purpose of the meetings is to help those interested better understand the preferred management direction and the alternatives. Thank you for participating in the amendment process.

Sincerely,

/s/ Kathleen A. McAllister

KATHLEEN A. MCALLISTER
Deputy Regional Forester

Enclosures (2)